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Series B.

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April 10, 1959.

TO: EUR - Mr. Merchant
FROM: BNA - Woodbury Willoughby *Very Urgent*
SUBJECT: Future U.S. Tactics Vis-a-Vis the U.K. on the Berlin Question

Discussion

The British Government's position on the Berlin crisis rests on the following general considerations: (1) The West must not forsake the population of free Berlin even at the risk of war; (2) Modern war is likely to be so devastating, however, that every reasonable effort, including particularly a Summit Conference, must be made to work out a mutually acceptable modus vivendi; (3) The British public, which is coming to equate war with the Soviets with annihilation of the U.K., cannot be led voluntarily into a situation involving serious risk of nuclear war unless the West has sincerely tried through positive offers to settle the Berlin dispute with Russia and has failed clearly because of Soviet intransigence; (4) A general election must be held by May 1960, a factor which undoubtedly causes the British Government (and the Opposition) to weigh public reactions to its policies more heavily than usual; (5) The gap between Western and Soviet positions on re-unification of Germany is so wide that two Germanies exist today and are likely to exist for some time to come (this consideration is implied but not openly expressed by the British); (6) The West must not agree to disengagement, neutralization of Germany or other measures which would alter to its disadvantage the balance of forces on the European continent; (7) The Soviets, because of rising internal pressures for higher living standards, stand to lose more than the West from a reduction in tensions.

These considerations lead the British to believe that during the forthcoming negotiations the most promising areas in which to search for a modus vivendi on Berlin are as follows: (1) Mutual recognition of the existence of two Germanies might permit agreement on a new basis for the Western presence in the city; (2) Agreement on a zone in which certain levels of armament would not be exceeded and which would be subject to inspection could lead to a reduction in tensions; and (3) The Berlin problem may have to be solved in isolation, possibly through internationalization of access to and control of the city.

As regards tactics, the British belief that only Khrushchev can speak for the Soviet Union leads them to insist on a Summit meeting whether or not progress is made at a prior Foreign Minister's Conference. In fact, if lack of progress should lead to an increase in tension,

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they are likely to be all the more rigid in their insistence. In this framework, the British view of Western tactics is that we should devise proposals to put forward to the Soviets which will permit us to avoid having to make a choice between diplomatic defeat and taking steps which would probably lead to war. It seems very likely, therefore, that the British will go far to prevent failure of a Summit Conference, possibly even to the point of pressing us to accept proposals which do not adequately protect Western interests.

Should a Summit Conference nonetheless fail, the support which we could then expect from the British for stern measures would depend largely on whether blame for failure of the Conference rests clearly with the Soviets and on the degree to which the British at that time link firm maintenance of our position in Berlin with the general security requirements of the West.

At present there is a lack of mutual understanding between high levels of the British Government and the British public, on one hand, and the French, Germans and ourselves, on the other, due to differing attitudes towards the Berlin crisis. This gap could seriously hamper=efforts we may have to make after failure of a Summit Conference to lead the British to accept the analysis of the situation outlined in the paragraph above. We need, therefore, to take what measures we can to re-establish rapport with the British without risking any substantive elements of our position.

Recommendations SANITIZED COPY
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2. That we avoid repetition of actions such as the C-130 high level flight in the Berlin air corridor which tend to give the impression to the British that we are not sincerely interested in agreement with the Soviets. In this connection, we should, if at all possible, see whether we can work out with the Congressional authorities involved some means of limiting publicity over implementing the NATO stockpile agreement in Germany.

3. That we go out of our way even more to keep British Government officials steadily informed through frequent, intimate and frank conversations of the reasoning behind our positions, particularly emphasizing the impact of Soviet tactics of gradual aggression and the cumulative effect of psychological retreats. We should obtain Ambassador Whitney's views as soon as possible on ways in which Embassy London may be helpful. In this connection, it might be useful to talk to the Political Counselor, Brewster Morris, when he returns next week after home leave. We should also not exclude the possibility of a trip to London by a high Departmental officer after a Summit Conference.

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4. That, as the crisis develops, speeches by the President be prepared with an eye on British official and public reactions. In particular, such speeches could show a sympathetic appreciation of Britain's vulnerable position and of Macmillan's great efforts to find a solution to the crisis. They should also drive home the point that firmness rather than concession is the surest way of avoiding war over Berlin.

5. That we continue to make every effort to meet the British on small points which do not weaken our position.

6. And that we maintain as solid a front as possible with both the French and Germans, since, in the last analysis, it is most unlikely that the British would, even under immediate threat of war, adopt policies which would make it appear that of the Western allies they alone are willing to abandon Berlin.

7. That we avoid any additional irritants in Anglo-American relations in other areas, particularly trade relations, because these irritants serve to detract increasingly from the desire of the British public to stand firmly as an ally of the United States. In this connection, the decision soon to be taken regarding heavy electrical equipment manufacturers may be very important.

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GER - Mr. Vigderman (in draft)